

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 2, line 28, with the following rewritten paragraph:

It is preferable for the method above to further comprise the steps of linking attributes of the product and parts to which the serial numbers are assigned[[,]] to the same serial numbers, and storing the attributes together with their linking information in the database. Preferably, the method further comprises the steps of linking histories of the product and parts to which the serial numbers are assigned[[,]] to the same serial numbers, and storing the histories together with their linking information in the database.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 3, line 14, with the following rewritten paragraph:

means for supporting a user to create a structural tree of a product to be stored in the database, which defines the relationship between the product and its parts, and contains part ~~number~~ numbers assigned to the product and the parts and unique serial numbers assigned to the product and at least major parts, the same part number being assigned to products and parts having the same structure, but different serial numbers being assigned to products and parts even having the same structure; and

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 5, line 25, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Figs. 2(a) and 2(b) are explanatory diagrams showing examples of structural trees of assemblies or assembled products having the same structure, according to the present invention. As is illustrated in Fig. 2 (a), an assembled product denoted by a part number (P/N) 10 (hereinafter referred to as "product 10") consists of parts denoted by part numbers 11, 12 and 13 (hereinafter referred to as "parts 11, 12 and 13". It should be noted that a product can be also be conceptually regarded as a part and hence the term "part number" instead of the term "product number" is used in the description. The part 11 consists of parts 14-16 and the part 13 consists of parts 17 and 18 in the product shown in Fig. 2(a). Therefore, each of the parts 11 and 13 is referred to as a sub-assembly because they contain a plurality of parts, while each of the parts 12 and 14-18 is merely referred to a part in the structural tree in Fig. 2(a). Parts and sub-assemblies having different structures are respectively identified by individual part numbers, while assemblies or parts having the same constitution are assigned to the same part number.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 7, line 6, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The serial numbers do not have to be numbers in sequence. However, the same serial number is not assigned to two separate parts even though they are of the same structure. Therefore, by designating a specific serial number, a particular separate part can be identified and thus information of the part such as a vendor and/or buyer of the part, a product including the

part, etc. can be also be identified. The serial numbers 50 and 54 for the respective products 10 may be product numbers which are set by someone who takes an order and instructs a designer to make a design of the product. When a plurality of products of the same design are ordered and manufactured, the products are provided with different serial numbers. Namely, it is essential that physically separate products and parts are provided with different serial numbers even though they are of the same design.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 7, line 22, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Although serial numbers are assigned only to major parts including a product in this embodiment, they may be assigned to any ~~parts~~ part. Although they may be assigned to sub-assemblies, it is preferable to allocate serial numbers only to a product and final unit parts which cannot be divided into lower parts. As is previously described, a product (manufacturing) number may be utilized as a serial number of a product.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 12, line 16, with the following rewritten paragraph:

It is possible to centralize various kinds of meta-data about standard products and products for a specific customers and bulk data associated with product composition. The meta-data contains parent-child relation information about products and parts, and various information about ~~of~~ attributes, purchase and manufacturing costs, and remodeling histories, for

instance. The bulk data contains drawings, documents, specifications, design change information, business showings, table of parts, and so on.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 14, line 12, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The database 83 can ~~be~~ also be accessed by a design/manufacture section 86 in a factory to obtain the information thereof. In the section 86, products and parts are designed and manufactured in accordance with the information in the database 83. The section 86 works in design cycle.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 14, line 18, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The database 83 can ~~be~~ also be accessed by a domestic and overseas after sales service station 87 to obtain the information therein. In accordance with the information obtained from the database 83, after-sales service is provided. When a supplied product fails or a claim is put in (88), a request for dealing with the failure or claim may be made to the after-sales service station 87. Upon receiving the request, the after-sales service station 87 accesses the product management database 83 and after-sales service such as repair or replacement is provided based on the information in the database 83. The result of the service is stored in a customer maintenance history management data file 89.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 17, line 13, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Upon receiving the report, a designer comes up with a countermeasure (Step 22). Based on the proposed countermeasure, it is determined whether it is necessary to design new parts (Step 23). If so, a designer designs the new ones and assigns new part numbers, serial numbers and, if necessary, drawing numbers to the newly designed parts, and inputs the assigned numbers through the design terminal 61 (Step 24).

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 18, line 21, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The service section conducts remodeling in response to an instruction from the design section. Since the parts are not exchanged for new parts ~~and~~ but are only subjected to processing, their serial numbers are not changed (Step 29).

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 20, line 3, with the following rewritten paragraph:

According to the present invention, since a structural tree is prepared by using part numbers that are respectively given to parts of the same design of an assembled product and is stored in a tree file of a computer, the composition of the product can be recognized readily and clearly by referring to the structural tree. Further, since a unique serial number is assigned to each of at least major parts of ~~an~~ a product, and such serial numbers are linked to the part numbers and the linked numbers are all stored in the computer file, serial numbers and part

numbers are properly associated with each other. Still further, since a major part is marked with a serial number, information about the part can be retrieved using its serial number.

Please replace the paragraph beginning page 20, line 17, with the following rewritten paragraph:

It should also be understood that the foregoing relates to only preferred embodiments of the invention, and that it is intended to cover all changes and modifications of the examples of the invention herein chosen for the purpose of the disclosure, which do not constitute departures from the spirit and scope of the invention.